

"Child's Play"

LA Henderson

Kayla twitched her tail away from Devin, giggling at having foiled him again.

He sat back against the wall of the plastic stairwell, his lips pulled sideways with a good-natured measure of mingled amusement and exasperation.

"Now, now," he intoned, "you have to let me enjoy you in that costume *eventually*."

Kayla peered down at him from the landing, teeth pulling her lower lip into her smile. The over-sized blue cat ears perched in her mess of blonde hair made the sparkle in her angelic eyes all the more pronounced.

"Eventually," she conceded, dangling her tail back down the multi-colored stairs. "I don't know anything about *now*."

The male said nothing in reply, his green eyes intent on the furry length of blue fabric just out of his reach, his body tense though he held perfectly still. Patience and persistence were what would allow him to win.

Kayla glanced back over the edge, unsure of whether the game continued or even if Devin was still there. She frowned at his inaction and let her tail down just a little bit lower.

He pounced, winding the end of the tail around his palm. Victory danced in the teeth of his feral grin.

Kayla struggled mutely on the upper landing to get away, grabbing on to the lip of the slide for leverage, but with nor real hope for escape. The tail was attached firmly to the shorts she wore, and she was prevented from shucking those by the multiple belts intended to support the extra weight.

She smiled as she gave in and her fingers slipped from the hard plastic edges.

Devin pulled her, hand over hand, down the stairs into his lap, disregarding every small scrape and bruise she gained on the descent.

"I know about now," he growled at his prize. "Isn't that fortunate?"

Kayla licked her lips and wove her fingers through his dark hair, caressing the horns he wore.

"Very," she purred, arching her neck for a kiss.

He evaded her with a smirk. They were playing by his rules now.

The blonde's lips pushed out into a pretty pout.

He chuckled.

"Eventually," he answered. "Now," emphasis dripped off the word, "we are going to have some wine."

He turned and made his way smoothly down the plastic steps, despite the double awkwardness imposed by the low clearance and his burden.

She blinked up at him in the clearer light of the open playground.

"I thought we were only playing," she protested.

The horned-man didn't respond as he forged through the twilight that had stolen the playground's usual occupants away for trick-or-treating.

Kayla clutched tightly at his shoulders, guileless blue eyes locked on his darkened face. His normally familiar features were now as unclear to her as the clouds around the moon.

A chime sounded as he pushed through the door to the wine boutique across the street, and the fluorescent lights made his visage clear to her once more.

Kayla's shoulders relaxed, and then tensed again as she felt a disapproving stare come to rest on her. She slowly ripped her gaze from Devin to see Father Patrick glaring at them.

The shopkeeper pushed a bag at the priest.

"Here you go, Father. This should be enough to get you through tomorrow," he said cheerfully. "You just let me know if your order's ever delayed again. I'll be happy to cut you the same deal any time."

"The Lord thanks you," the man intoned gravely, eyes still on Kayla and her companion. "There will be many in need of absolution in the morning." He pursed his lips.

Devin let her slide down his body to a standing position, but continued to hold her tail wrapped about his hand.

The shopkeeper glanced up from the register at the priest's odd intonation, and beamed at the pair.

"Good evening, Mr. Finn!" he greeted. "I've got just the perfect vintage for Halloween night! It's so deep and well-aged, it's almost scary!" The man laughed at his own bad joke. "Come on back and taste it - I know you'll appreciate it!"

"If it's up to my standards, I may take a little," he drawled as he stepped toward the door now held open for him, dropping Kayla's tail.

"But-" she demurred, reaching back for the security of their connection.

"I'll be back," he whispered, his lips warm against her ear, and then disappeared into the depths of the store.

She was left alone with the priest.

Silence reigned as both came to the realization.

"Well now, Kayla, my little lost lamb." Father Patrick spoke first. "You had to know that God would find you again eventually."

Her eyes went wide and her lips went white.

"Oh, yes! I understand it all now," he continued, gesturing grandly as he moved toward her. She shrank into the wall, her tail trailing before her.

"God decreed that the usual order of communion wine should be delayed so that I might be here on this Devil's Night," he spat the capital letters, "to see you, fallen and seduced by Satan, and finally penetrate that bubble you've constructed around yourself."

Father Patrick knelt to pick up her tail. He held the fuzzy length like he would a copperhead, his lip curled.

"This *isn't* child's play, Kayla." The patient tone he used, the almost kind inflection, was entirely incongruous with the way he looked over the girl in her cute little kitten costume. "I don't know how to get the importance of following God's rules into you."

Abruptly, the priest snapped his fist closed around the costume piece and yanked. The woman cried out in pain as the various belts on the shorts bit into her.

Father Patrick dropped the tail at her feet, now satisfied.

"Come back to church tomorrow," he said, scooping his package of wine off the counter, smiling amiably. "You can be a lamb of God's flock again."

The door chimed as he left.

Kayla was still standing, pressed against the wall, blue eyes wide and teary, when Devin returned, a bottle of red wine in one hand.

"You'll absolutely love this...."

His brow creased first with concern, then realization and self-reproach, as he saw his little kitty. He set the wine on the counter, walked softly over to where she stood, unseeing, and gathered her close.

She shivered a little, tension easing slightly but noticeably from her frame.

He rubbed her back and, absently, plucked up her tail, winding the length of it about his hand.

Gaze still locked in a space outside of the material world, Kayla arched her neck towards him.

Now he gave her a kiss.